



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THREE COLUMBIA RESIDENTS PLEAD GUILTY TO METH CHARGES

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that three Columbia, Mo., residents pleaded guilty in federal court today to charges related to the production of methamphetamine.

Chadwick Wayne Acison, 27, **Sharon L. Baker**, 53, and **Laurie Jean Loftus**, 23, all of Columbia, pleaded guilty in separate appearances before U.S. District Judge Scott O. Wright.

By pleading guilty this morning, Graves said, **Acison** admitted that he manufactured 50 grams or more of methamphetamine. **Acison** was arrested on Feb. 26, 2003, when law enforcement officers were called to the home of **Baker**, **Acison's** mother, because they encountered a man running from the area who had an order of protection pending against him that prohibited contact with **Baker**. As the officers stood at the sliding glass door of **Baker's** apartment, they smelled a strong odor of ether and chemical solvent consistent with the manufacture of methamphetamine. Officers also saw **Acison's** car parked near the apartment, and inside the car, two cans of starting fluid and a blister pack of ephedrine, items used in the production of methamphetamine.

While executing a search warrant of **Baker's** apartment and **Acison's** vehicle, Graves said, officers found methamphetamine and items consistent with the manufacture of methamphetamine. While executing a search warrant of **Acison's** trailer, officers recovered an operational methamphetamine laboratory.

By pleading guilty this afternoon, **Baker** admitted that she knowingly made her apartment at 2939 Leeway Dr. available for the purpose of unlawfully manufacturing, storing and distributing methamphetamine.

By pleading guilty this afternoon, **Loftus** admitted that she knowingly made her residence

at 3406 Range Line, which she shared with **Acison**, available for the purpose of unlawfully manufacturing, storing and distributing methamphetamine.

Under federal statutes, **Acison** could be subject to a mandatory minimum sentence of five years in federal prison without parole, up to 40 years, plus a fine up to \$2 million. Under federal statutes, **Baker** and **Loftus** could each be subject to a sentence of up to 20 years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine up to \$500,000. Their sentences will be determined according to the United States Sentencing Guidelines. Sentencing hearings will be scheduled after the completion of presentence investigations by the United States Probation Office.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jim Lynn. It was investigated by MUSTANG (the Mid-Missouri Unified Strike Team and Narcotics Group), the Boone County, Mo., Sheriff's Department, the Hallsville, Mo., Police Department, the Columbia, Mo., Police Department, and the Boone County, Mo., Fire Protection District – Hazmat Methamphetamine Response Team.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at
www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow